

Watertown Public Arts and Culture Committee

Meeting Notes, February 24, 2025, 6 pm

In Attendance: Swati Biswas, (left at 6:30 for alternate meeting), Barbara Epstein, Matt Hanna, Elizabeth Helfer, Roberta Miller, Dawn Evans Scaltreto, Erin Webb, Jay Wilson, Sally Young and WCATV; Artist/Scientist teams - Sophie Tuttle and Amber Siegel; Leah Craig, Nicole Weber and Amy Mertyl (additional partner Romi Butscher was unable to attend); Y. Jenny Wang and Ira Klein; Patrick Fairbairn and Jenn Houle

1. Opening Inspiration – Skipped over tonight as Roberta was having trouble with an internet connection. Dawn opened meeting at 6:05
2. Approval of January Minutes – Erin makes a motion and Barbara seconds, unanimously approved. Dawn apologized that they went out late because of a family health issue.
3. Edible Watertown –
 - a. National Endowment for the Arts Project Grants for Expert Pairings – Right now it appears that the funding we were granted is still available and coming our way despite government unrest and withdrawal of certain funding initiatives.
 - b. Expert Pairings Presentations
 - i. Amber Siegel (CWRA) and Sophie Tuttle. This team presented first. Their project is titled “River Run”. CWRA and Hartman Deetz from Mashpee Wampanoag CWRA Advisor are project partners. The hope is that DCR will become an additional partner, possibly providing the surface for the mural on the side of the dam.
 - ii. Leah Craig, Nicole Webber, Romi Kattelison and Amy Mertl. The second presentation was by this team. Their project is titled “Tangled Connections” and will highlight knotweed, a very invasive species used as material. There will also be summer and fall blooming native plants in containers that will be able to stay watered for long periods of time. There will be a seed library featuring native species, and an informational website and on-site information about knotweed. There will also be a community activity with craft materials made from knotweed (reed pens, paper and dyes) as well as knotweed treats crafted by O’Some Café as project partners. They would also create seating from knotweed that may be brought out for community events.
 - iii. Jenny Wang and Ira Klein. This team presented third. “Remixing the Forest” is their project. Their preferred location is at the Arsenal Yards “Backyard” area. Or at the Commander’s Mansion. They will present

lithophane photographs, somewhere between a photograph and a sculpture, displayed with string lights. An interactive element involves using a marble for each visitor who will vote to choose which layers to increase to enhance the audio and visual layers of the song. The student project at Lowell School, the Miawaki Forest, will be featured in the images. The project will finish with a video presentation in October or November which will live on YouTube.

- iv. Patrick Fairbairn and Jenn Houle presented last. Their project is titled, “Faces of the Forest.” It will involve some interesting signage and a zine that is educational for the community. The sassafras/spicebush, red-backed salamander and spicebush swallowtail will be featured species. The forest is very unique in the area being intact since pre-Colonial times. Biodiversity, climate change and carbon processing will be highlighted.
- c. Vote to Approve or Approve with Conditions – Some of the comments have requested that we tie some of the projects to curriculum at the local schools. Sally also mentioned that our committee can publicize all four projects so that people are aware where and when they are happening. Liz did site visits with each team and feels that the participants were each very thoughtful. The only specific request was that there be signage at the dam for the River Run project. Barbara moves and Sally seconds, all vote in favor in moving forth with the projects.

4. Subcommittee and Project Team Reports

a. Outreach

- i. PACC Arts Bulletin – went out last week.
- ii. Cultural Leaders Meeting Update
 - a. Massachusetts 250th Meeting at Commander’s Mansion March 6, 11 am
 - b. Next Cultural Leaders Meeting – Likely will be the last one as the responsibilities will be absorbed by the Watertown Cultural District
- iii. Watertown Cultural District Website <https://watertownmaculture.com>
- iv. Watertown Walks Series for Arts and Culture
 - a. April 17 at 1pm starting at City Hall: YardArt led by Liz Helfer
 - b. May 15 at 1pm starting at the MCA: Mosesian Center for the Arts led by Matt Hanna and MCA
 - c. June 12 at 1pm starting at the intersection of Arlington and Nichols: Arshile Gorky led jointly by a mental health professional and Jack Dargon

- d. July 17 at 10am starting at the Edmond Fowle House: Revolutionary Sites led by the Historical Society of Watertown (preceding Treaty Day on 7/19)
 - e. August 21 at 10am starting at Saltonstall field: Community Sculpture Walk led by Liz Helfer
 - f. September 18 at 1pm starting at WCA-TV: WCA-TV led by Matt Hanna
 - g. October 16 at 1pm starting at Till Wave Gallery: Art on the East End led by Liz Helfer
 - v. Little Local Conversations podcast: one year birthday celebration on March 18th 5:30 – 7:30at the MCA
- b. Governance & Funding –
 - i. New Member referred to Subcommittee by City Council - Jesse Needleman
 - ii. Nominations for Vice Chair – either self nominate or make suggestions by next meeting, term limits should be considered.
- c. River of Light –
 - i. Begin planning for 2026 event in Summer 2025
- d. Murals: 100 Years of Arshile Gorky
 - i. Overview of Commemorative Events – Sally will be hosting artist Brandon Marshall and will hopefully have a few social events with him during his time here. There will be a panel moderated by WCATV, and an exhibition at the Armenian Museum in Fall of 2025. A resolution by the City Council will declare March 1 Arshile Gorky Day. The square has already been named for the artist.
- e. Community Sculpture Walk
 - i. Confirming music with Rick Saunders for reception on May 17 at 11 am
- 5. Old Business
 - a. Eco-Fest on May 10, 2025 from 11 am – 2 pm at the Commander’s Mansion
 - i. PACC table reserved for Edible Watertown with 2 – 3 volunteers – Barbara, Dawn and Sally may be there
 - b. Porchfest Update – 25 hosts and about 50 performers signed up now. Erin Rathe from Development has made it easy for businesses to sign up for after hours events. The city has waived a fee for a music permit for that event.
 - c. YardArt Update – it is happening! Burma Shave signage are being made this Saturday at Turtle Studios with Susan Jones.
- 6. New Business
 - a. Watertown Pride Sunday June 1, 12 – 4 pm Saltonstall Park
 - i. PACC Table for “Love in Full Bloom” – we have been asked by Tammy from the Commander’s Mansion, there will be a painting event featuring

- flowers to hang on the fence like the hearts last year. Dawn will do a face painting boot camp and man a face painting table.
- ii. Materials provided by Department of Public Works – we should base paint the flowers in color
 - b. “Open for Business” in Coolidge Square during Mt. Auburn Street Construction
 - i. Project of the Community Design Division, funded through Economic Development, \$50,000 for 3 sites to span the length of the project
 - a. Creative Placemaking to drive business through the next 2 – 4 years
 - b. Would like a representative from PACC for the Review Committee
7. Mosesian Center for the Arts - A major fundraising event for the 20th anniversary of the center which opened in September of 2005 is happening on May 22, 6 – 8:30 pm, and will feature an exhibition in the lobby by Fritz Smith who made many stunning lanterns for River of Light. Some of his lanterns are currently installed in the lobby of MCA along with work from other artists. Just beautiful.
8. Visitor Input – No visitors tonight
9. Adjourn – Jay makes a motion and Barbara seconds, all in favor at 8:04 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Evans Scaltreto

March 13, 2025